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"Asbestos: Inside and Outside, Toxic and Haptic"

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Asbestos is a fibrous mineral. Airborne asbestos—similar to nuclear radiation and chemical atmospheric pollutants—is invisible to the naked eye, and living and breathing alongside it has deferred toxic effects on human bodies. The toxicity of asbestos operates by breaching the boundary that appears to separate the insides of our bodies from our outward environments. Asbestos attests to the fact that the human does not just touch the nonhuman, culture does not just touch nature, but the boundaries between them operate within a framework of trans-corporeality, viscous porosity, and reciprocal interpenetration. In this article the author examines the history and materiality of asbestos to theorize toxic embodiment through the mutuality of the haptic sense and the breaching of boundaries of inside and outside. The author develops this through an analysis of her own film project *Asbestos* (2016), shot at the mining town of Asbestos, Quebec, mobilizing a discussion of haptic visuality to theorize toxic embodiment in its relationship to reciprocity, vulnerability, and responsibility. In the case of asbestos, the boundary of inside and outside traverses a series of unfolding scales: from the boundedness of a single cell, to a single organism encased in skin, to a body enclosed in a hazmat suit, to architecture and surrounding space, city and hazardous-waste landfill site, contaminated and safe, local and global. Asbestos shows that there is no spatial or temporal "outside" in which to deposit toxic materials, and that being an embedded part of the environment means there is no "outside" to either vulnerability or responsibility. (Text from author's abstract)

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